

**Testimony of Ingrid Gillespie
Director of Prevention, Liberation Programs Inc
Member of MATCH Coalition**

In Regards to

**S.B. No. 399 AN ACT CONCERNING THE TOBACCO SETTLEMENT TRUST FUND AND THE SALE
OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS.**

Dear Distinguished Chairpersons and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Ingrid Gillespie and I am the Director of Prevention at Liberation Programs Inc, a large behavioral health organization in Fairfield County providing prevention, treatment and recovery services. I am also a member of MATCH (Mobilize Against Tobacco for Connecticut's Health), a coalition of over 50 members dedicated to help eliminate smoking and smoking related illness in Connecticut. I have had the opportunity to engage in tobacco prevention and smoking cessation efforts in a variety of capacities since 2005 including teaching youth and parents about the risks of smoking and vaping, facilitating a Smoking Cessation Supports Initiative for those living with serious mental illness and those with substance use disorders (SUDs) and previous advocacy efforts to fund the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund. Thank you for the opportunity to share comments on SB 399 An Act Concerning The Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund and The Sale of Tobacco Products, in which we strongly urge that the committee dedicate at least \$12 million dollars *annually* starting this year.

The importance of consistent funding to support prevention and cessation efforts is underscored by the well-established long-term health effects of tobacco use and by the as yet unknown long-term health effects of e-cigarette use. Nicotine is as addictive, or more addictive, than heroin and cocaine (UCSF Health). Cigarette and smokeless tobacco companies know this, and they regularly spend billions of dollars in advertising. For example, in 2019, those companies spent \$8.2 billion to market their products (CDC). Today, much of that is directed to vaping products, and youth are particularly vulnerable to addiction; they can become addicted within a few days (Center for the Advancement of Health). Approximately 90% of smokers began by age 18 years. Teens underestimate the addictive potential, and the adolescent brain is far more vulnerable than the adult brain to addiction. Those who vape are more likely to move onto cigarettes (Yale Medicine). Once addiction has been established, cessation is a difficult process. Addiction is a chronic disease requiring treatment resources (NIDA). Smokers may attempt to quit 8 to 11 times before succeeding (CDC). Taken together, these facts emphasize the need for consistent annual funding to address this important public health issue.

In summary, I am very grateful that this bill provides resources for this fiscal year to address this issue, but the effectiveness of measures to address the health effects of tobacco products requires a more consistent investment of resources. For that reason, I strongly urge you to consider including language that ensures (mandates) dedication of adequate resources to address this important public health issue.

Thank you for your consideration,
Ingrid Gillespie